

A LOVING ENTREATY NO. 1743

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 7, 1883,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified.”
Isaiah 43:26.*

We shall mainly dwell upon the first invitation of the text, “Put Me in remembrance.” If you will cast your eyes upon the Scripture itself you will be struck with its singular position. It makes a paradox of the most striking kind if you read it in connection with the preceding clause, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance.” This looks like a contradiction, but, as a wise teacher will win attention by dark sayings, so does the Word of God abound in expressions by which thought is excited, and the lesson is more deeply impressed upon the mind. Many are the paradoxes of the prophets and of the Lord and leader of all the prophets. Who can read without attention two such sentences as these in succession—“I will not remember your sins,” and “Put me in remembrance”? The use of such paradoxes in Scripture needs no sort of apology. Man is a living riddle. Does any man understand himself? He may think he does, but by this conceit he betrays his ignorance. The sinner is a paradox, and the saint is a double paradox. I say it is meet and right that the Holy Spirit should thus use paradoxical expressions, because those whom He addresses have paradoxes lying deep in their nature, and so the speech is congruous to the listener.

In this verse man is invited to draw near to God. Those same men, of whom God says that He was weary of them, are bid to plead with Him. “You have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.” And yet it is evident that in another sense the Lord was not weary of them, for He calls upon them to come to a conference with Him, saying, “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together.” This approach to God is the way of our salvation. The first thing that must be done with some men is to make them think of God at all, and the best thing that can be done with any man is to draw him nearer and yet nearer to the great Father of spirits. “It is good for me to draw near to God,” said one who knew right well what he was speaking of, and every man who does not yet understand such an utterance will find it to be true if he will test it. Here is a commandment with promise—“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” Here is another—“Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Nearness to God is evidently the hope of the seeker. For the prodigal in the distant country, the most essential thing was that he should arise and go to his father. It would have been of little use for him to have washed himself from the filth of the swine trough, or to have broken off his acquaintance with the citizens of that country. He could never be right while he dwelt so far from his father’s house. The most sober and secluded life in the far country would not have satisfied the cravings of his heart any more than the husks would have filled his belly. True, it would have been some improvement upon spending his living riotously, but it would have worked no change in his soul, and given no rest to his heart. The remedy is the father’s kiss, the father’s bosom, the father’s house, the father’s love. Understand my text, then, however paradoxical it may seem, as being a genuine invitation on the part of a gracious God to the most provoking of men. Though, they have acted so wickedly that He may well be tired of them, He presses them to hold conversation with Him. If anything has been charged upon them in error, He is willing to hear their complaints—only He longs that they will not keep at a sullen distance. God grant that the invitation may be accepted by those of you to whom it will this morning be addressed.

We shall regard our text thus—first, it is *a humbling challenge*—“Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together.” Secondly, as we cannot answer the challenge, we will put another sense upon the words and accept them in *an amended version*, such as penitence can carry out. And thirdly, we shall see in it *a*

practical suggestion, perhaps more than one. May the Holy Spirit enable us to learn the lessons and carry out the suggestions!

I. First, then, our text appears before us as A HUMBLING CHALLENGE. God had punished Israel on account of sin. Israel was not penitent, but in self-righteousness judged that the Lord was harsh and severe. “Come, then,” says God, “come and plead your case with Me. Put Me in remembrance of any virtues on your part which I may be supposed to have overlooked. If I have misjudged you, if you have not really been neglectful of My service and worship, let the matter be rectified. If you really have a righteousness of your own, put Me in remembrance of it.”

On looking back we find that the Lord had charged His people with *neglect of prayer*, “But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob.” This is the charge which we are compelled to bring against all unconverted men and women, you do not call upon God; you live without sincere and fervent prayer. Perhaps you offer a form of prayer, but that is nothing if your heart does not go with the words. This is rather to mock God than truly to call upon Him. But come now, if there is any mistake in this charge, disprove it! If you have earnestly called upon the Lord through Christ Jesus, if you have been diligent in seeking His face and yet He has turned His back upon you—testify against Him. It will be a new thing under the sun to find a praying heart rejected at the throne of grace. I know you cannot deny the accusation of prayerlessness. If you are Christless, you are prayerless. If you have received no mercy it is because you have not sought it at the mercy seat.

Next the Lord charged Israel that they had *not delighted in Him*—“You have been weary of Me, O Israel.” Is not this a charge which cannot be denied? You men and women who are not regenerate and have never received the pardon of your sin, is it not true that you are weary of God? You readily enough grow tired of a sermon in which we try to speak of Him, though you would listen for hours to a silly tale. You become tired of the Sabbath Day. What a weariness it is! You are weary of the Bible, how little you read it! A foolish novel suits you better. If you hear Christians talking wisely and seriously of the things of Christ, you have no liking for their words, you would rather listen to a comic song. To you the house of God is the temple of dullness, and the worship of God is bondage. As for God Himself, you will not allow yourself to remember Him, He is not in all your thoughts. You sometimes think that even heaven itself would be a weary place for you if it is the praising and adoring of God, and communion with Him. Can you deny this? If you can, you are invited to state your innocence before the Lord. But I know that in truth you cannot raise the question, for there is within your mind an unquestionable aversion to the service of God. In fact, you would feel happier if there were no God, and if thoughts of eternity never intruded themselves. Take heed lest your aversion become mutual, and God should say, “My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me.”

The Lord had also said that these people *did not honor Him*—“You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices.” It may be you have presented no tokens of love to the Lord at all. Or, on the other hand, you may have brought sacrifices, but you have not honored God with them. You have given that you might be known to give, or because others gave, but not with the view of honoring God. You come and sit with His people and join in their songs, but you do not seek the glory of God by it, nor is this the main objective of your daily life, you know it is not. Yet if it is so, if any unconverted man can say that whether he eats or drinks or whatever he does, he seeks to do all to the glory of God, this ought to be known. It would be a new thing under the sun. In truth, it would prove that the man was converted, and had been renewed in the spirit of his mind by the grace of God. But it is not so—you have not honored the name of your Creator and Benefactor, you have robbed Him of the glory due His name.

Moreover, the Lord charged Israel that they *did not love Him*—“You have bought me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifices.” No token of love had been presented, but they had made the Lord to serve with their sins. The purchase of oil with money had not come into their thoughts. They could not afford it, they said, but when they were worshipping their false gods they could find money enough—“They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver in the balance.” So there are men who cannot afford to give anything to the cause of God or Christian charity, but for their sinful pleasures they can waste their substance. No sacrifice is too expensive for a man’s lusts. He will do anything that he may live a merry life, which merry life consists in rebellion against God. This proves that man has no love in his heart to God. O Sinner! Did you ever feel a tear start in your eyes at

the thought of God's being dishonored? Did you ever humble yourself before God because you have yourself dishonored Him? Is His word dear to you? Is there music in the sweet name of Jesus to your ears? No, it is not so. You know you are dead to all this. He challenges you to plead your innocence if you can. Dare you take up the glove? Prove that you have loved Him. Put Him in remembrance of your kindly deeds and zealous acts. You have none to bring to remembrance. Your heart has had no delight in the Lord your God.

The Lord again challenges them upon the charge that they *had not obeyed Him*, "You have made Me to serve with your sins"—you have made Me a very slave with your waywardness. "You have wearied Me with your iniquities"—God's patience was tried to the utmost with their wanton wickedness. Is not this charge true—sadly true of many? Oh, you that have never accepted Christ, nor cast yourselves at His dear feet, you have by this willful refusal of love insulted the mercy of the Lord. You have had no respect of His law, you have not checked yourself because you were likely to offend, you have not stirred yourself up to please the Lord. Ah no! You have lived as if you were your own masters. If it is not so, you are now challenged to vindicate your characters. Do not set up a lying defense, but speak the truth. "Put Me in remembrance," God says. If you have abounded in prayer, if you have delighted in God, if you have sought His honor, if you have loved Him, if you have obeyed Him, then set out your righteousness before the sun and be not afraid. But you are not innocent before the Lord. Therefore humble yourselves, confess your guilt, and cover your face before the Lord. The Lord would thus humble you that you may repent, and that He may fulfill His word to you—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."

The challenge before us is occupied not only with the ways of man, but with the ways of God, for the Lord, here asserts of Himself, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense." That is to say, God is no hard task master; He is not an austere man, gathering where He has not sown. The commandments of God are essential justice; you could not improve upon them. No law could be more for our benefit than that which He has given us. The service of God is no bondage. Ask His children how they find it. When they take His yoke upon them and learn of Him, they find rest for their souls. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Perfect obedience is heaven. If God has treated you like slaves, if He has exacted of you more than His right, if He has made your heart heavy with endless labors, then say so, and state your grievance in solemn conversation with God. Only speak with Him. But who in his right senses will say that the service of God is anything but liberty? O beloved! When God forbids us anything, it is because He knows it would be for our harm. And when God commands us to do anything, it is because He knows that it is for our soul's welfare and eternal good. The moral law is the mirror of right. The will of the Lord as therein revealed, commends itself so thoroughly to the conscience of man that he cannot wage an honest warfare with it, it is "true and righteous altogether." If we are upright in our judgments, our desire will be, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" If we offend against the law it is not because it is unreasonable, unjust, or unkind. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is so, most surely so. Though I feel myself quite unable to plead the cause of God worthily as I would desire, I could stand here and weep because of the manner in which His creatures treat Him. I feel ashamed of myself that I can so coldly vindicate His cause, which deserves a far better advocate than I can be. But have you not, you that are ungodly, have you not treated the Lord shamefully? Have you not forgotten Him who never forgets you? Have you not turned your backs on your Benefactor and your Friend? Have you not refused the service which would have afforded your souls a deep delight? Have you not quarreled with your mercies, and fought against heaven itself? It is surely so. If you have anything to plead to the contrary, argue it with your Maker, only do not continue to keep away from Him. Turn unto Him and answer His appeal, "Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare you, that you may be justified."

II. I hope you will be prepared to follow me while our penitence suggests AN AMENDED VERSION. I do not mean an alteration of the words, but of the sense. Let us take the text as our consciousness of guilt desires to read it. There are certain things which God in great love invites us to bring before His memory. What are these? Let me tell you. If you cannot take up His challenge, and prove your personal righteousness, let the charges stand, with your silence as an approval to them. And now plead with Him and put Him in remembrance of matters which may serve your turn, and lead to your forgiveness.

First, put the Lord in remembrance of *that glorious act of amnesty and oblivion* which in sovereign grace He has proclaimed to the sons of men in the preceding verse. Come, now, all guilty and defiled, and say to Him, “Lord, though my iniquities testify against me, I rest upon Your forgiving word, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your iniquities for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.’” Remember that God has not forgotten to be gracious, neither has He changed a single declaration of His mercy. Still, He would have you remind Him of them as earnestly as if He had forgotten them. It is not for the refreshment of *His* memory, but for *yours*, that He wishes you now to put Him in remembrance. Never will you find a safer position as a sinner than kneeling at the mercy seat, pleading such words as these—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” At once, with tears and broken language, put the Lord in remembrance of His gracious promises, and say, “Remember Your word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” Cry to Him after this fashion, “Lord, do as You have said. Here is one who is full of iniquity. I pray You cleanse me. If I had no transgressions You could not blot them out, but here they are, I beseech You, blot them out according to Your word! Behold, I put You in remembrance of Your word. O Lord, let me hear You say—‘Your sins, which are many, are forgiven.’”

That done proceed to put the Lord in remembrance of your sins. Make an open unreserved acknowledgment unto the Lord. Tell Him that you have transgressed. Say with the returning prodigal, “I have sinned against heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son.” Hide nothing, for nothing can be hid, conceal nothing, for it cannot be concealed. Be sure, your sin will find you out, therefore, find out your sin, and surrender it into the hand of the great God that He may deal with it. Especially put the Lord in remembrance of this—that you have sinned against one who has continued to pardon you, and therefore you have sinned in a most cruel and ungrateful manner. It puts an exceeding heinousness into sin, that it is an offense against one who so freely forgives it. The Lord might long ago have cast us into hell, and yet He spares us—shall we find in this a liberty to offend yet more? “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” And this fact makes perseverance in rebellion a scarlet sin.

Confess this also, that you have continued by your sins to go away from Him who invites you to return, and promises you a welcome reception. Remember, if you are still out of Christ it is not because God has made you so. He takes an oath, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” He will not have your damnation laid at His door. He expressly says, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself,” and the tender Savior cries, “You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Acknowledge the truth of this. Though you may have foolishly boasted of your free will before, now be humbled about that wicked will of yours which threatens to be your destruction. Cry to the Lord on your knees, for the pardon of offenses against His mercy, and for the forgiveness of provocations against His long-suffering. He invites you to do it, therefore He says, “Put me in remembrance.”

When you have done this, if your spirit is much depressed, and your heart is driven to despair by a sense of your guilt, then I would advise you to put the Lord in remembrance of *the extraordinary reason which He gives for pardoning sin*—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions *for My own sake*.” Say unto Him, “Lord, there is no reason in me why You should spare me, but do it for Your own sake—for Your love’s sake, for Your mercy’s sake. You have said that You delight in mercy, Lord, delight Yourself in having mercy upon me. It is to Your glory to pass by transgression, it makes to the Lord Jesus Christ a great name when He puts away the guilt of men. Lord, I pray You, now for Your own sake, for Your Son’s sake, to cast a veil over all my former iniquities, and let me be reconciled to You by the death of Your Son.” I fear dear hearers, that I do not speak this as I ought to speak it. I wish I could weep over you while I plead with you. I implore you at once honestly and affectionately to obey the exhortation of the text. Come, I beseech you, hear your Father say, “Put me in remembrance: let us plead together.”

Put the Lord in remembrance of His sovereign grace, and of His all-sufficient power to bless. Put Him in remembrance that He has taken the vilest of the vile and washed them in the blood of Jesus, that

He has taken the hardest and most stubborn hearts, and softened them to the praise of the glory of His grace, and then add, “Lord, do all this in me, that I too may magnify Your gracious name!”

When you have gone as far as that in putting God in remembrance, I would with much affection advise you to plead *the Lord’s purpose and intent* revealed in the 21st verse, “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” Say, “Lord, I am Your poor creature. You have made me, even my very body is fearfully and wonderfully made, and the mysterious thing which dwells within me which I call my soul, is also the creature of Your power. Have You not made me for Yourself? Will You not have a desire to the work of Your own hands? Lord, come and bless me! Sinner as I am, and utterly undeserving, yet I am Your creature, do not fling me upon the dunghill. If You will forgive me, Lord, might I not praise You? Is there not room somewhere for me to give You thanks? In earth, or in heaven, may I not yet render to You some little service, and magnify Your name? Now, Lord, I do dishonor You while I live in sin, but I shall glorify You if You make me holy. I am as a worthless vessel, only fit to be cast with the broken potsherds, of no use to God or man, and scarcely of use even to myself, but in my person I beseech You, fulfill Your word, ‘This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.’” This is good arguing. After this fashion obey the word—“Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together.”

If that does not ease you, go a little further back in the chapter till you come to the 19th verse—“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.” Plead that *published declaration*! Say, “Lord, You have said, ‘I will do a new thing.’ It will indeed be a new thing if I am saved. I am driven to such self-abhorrence, that if ever I am saved I shall be a leading wonder among your miracles of grace.”—

*“Saved!—The deed shall spread new glory
Through the shining realms above!
Angels sing the pleasing story,
All enraptured with Your love!”*

It may be you can say—“Lord, I have been sighing, and crying, and groaning now by the month together, and I can find no peace. Oh, if You will but put a new song into my mouth, the dragons and the owls that saw me in my gloom shall open their eyes and be astonished, and honor the Lord God of Israel!” You have come to be familiar in your gloom with strange company, comparable to the dragons and the owls, therefore cry unto your Redeemer, “Lord, save me, and the owls will hoot no longer, or if they do, they will hoot to Your praise and the very dragons that all men dread shall become comfortable things and begin to magnify Your name, as said the Psalmist, ‘Praise Him you dragons, and all deeps.’” I know some who might say, “Lord, it will fill the entire workshop with wonder if I shall rejoice in Jesus. All my friends and companions will be amazed that I should become happy and holy through sovereign grace. I am the very last person they would have thought to see converted. Then will they know what Your arm can do, and confess that this is the finger of God. Men that could not open their mouths except to blaspheme the Lord shall stand awe-struck and astonished as they see what a brand is plucked from the burning.”

You see I have tried to help you in obeying this word—“Put me in remembrance.” But I cannot do the work for you. Dear unconverted hearers, you must yourselves make confession and plead for your lives. This pleading must be worked in you by the Spirit of God, and if it is, I could almost wish to be a mouse in your chamber, that I might listen to you while you are putting the gracious Father in remembrance of His promises, and of the glory which will come to His name if He will save you. Especially would I like to hear you begin thus—“Lord, remember Your only-begotten Son. Have You not declared that it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? I am a sinner, Lord, save me! Oh, remember Gethsemane, remember Calvary, remember the bloody sweat, remember the wounds of your Well-beloved, remember the cry, ‘It is finished!’ and give Him to see of the travail of His soul in me! Give me as a spoil to the Risen One, that in me He may see the reward for His pains!” That is the style of pleading. This will before long bring you rest and ease. God help you not only to hear me now with attention, but to go and see to the doing of it. I fear and

tremble lest my labor should be lost through your failing to come to the mark. In vain you do listen if you do not obey.

III. So this brings me to the last point, which is this, our text affords us some PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

If the Lord says to us, “Put Me in remembrance,” then, in the first place, it is very clear that *we ought to remember these things ourselves*. We cannot put another in remembrance of a thing which we ourselves forget. Come, then, let us for a time, remind ourselves of certain matters which we are prone to cast behind us. Going over the same ground which I have traversed before, I shall make no apology, since my desire is that God’s Spirit may impress it upon your hearts.

Oh, you that are not saved, remember the years in which you have lived without prayer! What a wonder that you have been permitted to live at all! Morning light and evening shade, and yet no prayer! Mercies on the table, mercies in the family, mercies to your body, mercies to your soul, and yet no prayer! Sermons heard, exhortations given, gentle entreaties all thrown away, for still there have been no prayer! “You have not called upon Me, O Jacob.” It is not good to take our sins in the whole, but to set them out in detail one after the other. Here is God ready to pardon, and we would not even ask for forgiveness. Here is God waiting to be gracious, and we have kept Him waiting these 40 years. Here is mercy’s door before us, and we will not knock, though there is a promise that it shall be opened to every knocker. Here is Jesus Himself knocking at our door till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, and yet we will not open! Remember that! Let this transgression come before us, and cause us deep repentance and self-humiliation.

Remember, next, for your own humbling, how weary you have been of God. I went over that just now, but think of it! Here is a creature that cannot endure to think of its creator. Here is one that has daily fed at the table of a friend and yet he never gives that friend a good word. Living where God’s works are all around you so that you cannot help but see them, when even the night does but unveil a new scene of wonder as it shows you the stars that were hidden by day, yet you can look upon that entire wondrous scene and yet refuse to see your God! You were tired of God, did not want to hear about Him, wished there were no God and no eternity, and that you could just enjoy yourself like the beasts do that live only in the present. Ah me! Think of this, and so let your sin come to remembrance—you have been willing rather to be a beast than serve God, and be as the angels.

Some I would earnestly urge to remember long years of neglect of God’s service, with all their neglect to the cause of God, all their lack of love to God, all the many times in which they have hardened their hearts, stopped their ears, and refused the warnings and invitations of their Savior. Such memories might be used of the Holy Spirit for their conviction. Oh, dear, unconverted hearers, am I speaking the truth about you or not? God forbid I should bring a false accusation against any man! I am not charging you now with the blacker and more open sins, for perhaps you are innocent of them, but yet this is the sin of sins—forgetfulness of God, weariness of His service, refusal to receive the salvation of His Son. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” You think of your business, and yet the great business of your salvation causes you no concern. Think of that, you put your dying body before your immortal soul. You are full of care and anxiety about matters which relate only to a span of time, and yet you care not for your eternal interests. Can you justify this? Are you in your senses? Why do you act so foolishly? There is a God whose smile is heaven and whose frown is hell, and yet you ignore His existence, and you neither seek Him nor serve Him. I know I plead badly, but my cause is a good one, and if you are right at heart you will feel its force. Ought not the wrongs done to God be admitted and forsaken? Say, dear hearer, “I remember my faults this day, and remembering them I will arise and go unto my Father, and put Him in remembrance that I may be forgiven.” My faith sees the Lord standing here blotting out the debts of all who will bring them to His remembrance. Come, bring your bills! Hand in the record of your debts to justice! Spread them now before the face of the Lord, not that He may condemn you for them, but that He may stamp them with the atoning blood and say, “I have blotted out your sins.” Do not hesitate to remind the Lord of them, for then He promises to forget them. I am sure if I could stand here tomorrow and exercise the power to remit all debts by giving a receipt in full for them all, if the one condition were that each debtor would produce his schedule of debts, no one would be backward in doing so. You who owe anything would search your files, rake out your drawers, and look in every place to find every unpaid account, so as to

have them all blotted out. I pray you do so in this spiritual business. Bring your sins to remembrance by humble acknowledgment and penitent confession, for “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” O Spirit of God, support this appeal to these my hearers, and send it home to the hearts of Your chosen, that they may confess their iniquities unto You and be saved this day!

A second practical suggestion is this, since the text says, “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together,” it is time that we should now *begin our pleading with God*. He says, “Come now, and let us reason together.” Let us not be so unreasonable as to refuse. I am once more going over the same ground, just as schoolmasters do with their pupils, teaching the same lesson over again, that it may be thoroughly learned. I do so long for the troubled sinner to find the way of peace at once, that I would beseech him to begin pleading with God at this moment. Plead thus, “Lord, there stands Your word, ‘I am He that blots out your transgressions,’ I entreat You make those words true for me!” Appealing to the faithfulness of God is a grand argument. To lay hold of God by His promise is the main part of the art of wrestling in prayer. No grip of the covenant angel is half as sure as that which faith gets when she seizes a promise. This is, as it were, the hem of Jehovah’s robe, blessed is he that can hold it, for it will never tear away. He that holds a promise holds the God who gave it, and he shall not trust the promise in vain. “Has the Lord said, and will He not do it?” Plead it, then—“Lord, You have said that You forgive sin, I pray You forgive mine. Had You never promised pardon, I could never have dreamed of gaining it, but since You have promised it, I dare not doubt Your word. My blackest, foulest, filthiest sins can be washed away, for You tell me that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. I urge Your words as my only claim. I implore You to carry out Your words.” We read that out of Christ’s mouth there goes a two-edged sword, may not His word of promise be to us as a sword with which we may overcome even mercy itself, conquering heaven by heaven’s own weapons? Oh that you may have faith enough to try this at once!

Be sure you do not forget to use in your pleading that verse about God being honored by the dragons and the owls. Say, “Lord, this very room in which I have cried to You of late for mercy bears witness to my sighs and groans and deep sorrows, but if You will grant me grace, it shall ring with Your praises. I have dwelt spiritually with owls and dragons, but if You will forgive me, these shall honor You. Lord, if You do but set me free, You will have won a new singer for the choirs of earth and for the orchestra of heaven. Oh, my Savior, I know my poor praises cannot make You more glorious, for You are divinely great, but still such as they are they shall be laid at Your feet.”

Next, plead with the Lord that He will have won your heart by His grace. He evidently desires it, for He complains, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices.” Does God care for sweet cane? Does He delight in burning fat? Ah no! But He does care to see His people making self-sacrifice, to prove their love, by presenting something to their Lord which cost them dear. He condescends to accept at their hands their love tokens, and He takes much pleasure in them. Now tell Him, “Lord, I am not worthy of Your acceptance, but still, if You will but save me, I will be all Yours, and all that I have shall be laid upon the altar. Lord, I must love You! I have nothing whereof to glory in that love, for how can I help it? I am under constraint to love You, because You first loved me. I am a captive to grace; I am bound hand and foot by the cords of Your love. When I have dared to entertain a hope that You would look upon me in mercy, I have felt my stony heart dissolve, and my soul has gone out after You with strong desire. If Your great love will indeed stoop to me, and to the putting away of all my sin, then my whole heart shall be bound to You forever, and I will magnify Your name as long as I have any being.” This is good pleading, be sure you use it with deep sincerity and true humility.

Then plead the argument which lies in the word, “for My own sake.” Cry, “Lord, do save me for the glory of Your own name, that men may know how gracious You are. There is room in me for the display of all the wonders of Your love, for I have been one of the chief sinners. O Lord, prove the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus by washing me, that I may be whiter than snow. I have shown a harder heart than most of my fellows. Oh that Your Spirit would display the energy of His operations by turning this stone to flesh! Lord, I have been unbelieving, yes, desperately full of doubt and unbelief. Oh, demonstrate in me the truth that faith is the gift of God! If you save the entire world besides me and save not me, there will be a note lacking in the music of Your mercy, for in some respects I stand alone, a special sinner. But, Lord, if You save me, You will put Your finger on a string that will give forth a note such as

can come from no other string in all the universe. You will have saved the most worthless of all, the one who can do least for You in return. You will have shown how gratuitous is Your mercy by bestowing it upon one who has no past merit, no present worth, no future hope of doing great things for You.” Thus plead with God, and may the Wonderful, the Counselor, direct your pleading till you prevail.

Finish all pleadings with the argument of the precious blood, for that shall prevail where all else is driven back. “I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” thousands say this when they repeat the creed, they do not feel that they are sinners, and therefore they find it very easy to believe in forgiveness. But, believe me, when a man knows and feels that he is in very deed a sinner before God, it is a miracle for him to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Nothing but the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit can work this faith in him. When you really know what it is to be lost and condemned, so that you receive the sentence of death in your own conscience, then it is a brave thing to believe in pardoning grace. Some of us remember when it seemed like mocking us for people to say, “Believe, Believe!” for we felt that it was one thing to say, “I believe,” and quite another thing to possess the faith of God’s elect. When God the Holy Spirit comes to reveal Jesus to us, and the poor empty sinner is plunged into Christ’s fullness, then there is glory to God both from the sinner’s faith, and from the object of that faith. God is magnified in the work of grace, for it is His from top to bottom. In the heart of the saved one is heard the voice, “I, even I, am the Lord; and besides Me there is no Savior.” Lofty looks are laid low, and boasting is excluded. Humility rules the mind, and obedience walks hand in hand with it. Then do renewed hearts cry, “O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You only will we make mention of Your name.”

Thus have I tried to plead with you for the Lord, wishing only your good and His glory. I am very conscious of my own weakness, much more so, perhaps, than ever I was in my life, but yet I expect to succeed with many of you. What am I apart from the Spirit of all grace? What am I but as a sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal? And yet I am not feebler than other servants of God in this respect, for we are all nothing apart from the Spirit—

*“Till God diffuse His graces down,
Like showers of heavenly rain,
In vain Apollos sows the ground,
And Paul may plant in vain.”*

Blessed be God we shall not plant in vain, for He is with us! Some of you have received the message, and I shall hear from you soon. Let it sink into the spirits of all of you. Do you feel any degree of softness creeping over you? Yield to it. It is the blessed Spirit now inclining you to repent, making you feel serious and thoughtful, anxious and desirous. Bow before His heavenly breath as the rush by the river yields to the wind! Yours shall be the benefit, but to the sweet Spirit of love, together with the Father and the Son, shall be glory forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 43:14-23, 44:1-8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—257, 579, 589.**

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